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ABSTRACT

This report concerns a qualitative study on African-American leadership effectiveness as perceived and defined by African-American student leaders at the University of New Mexico (Albuquerque). Six African-American student leaders (three males and three females) participated in-depth interviews. The interviews were audiorecorded and transcribed. The transcribed documents were analyzed to determine the themes from students' responses on the question of leadership effectiveness. The study did not evaluate leadership capabilities and qualities of students. The study's major objective was the creation of at least one hypothesis based on a theory of leadership grounded in the data. The students provided definitions of leadership in terms of: (1) goals of leadership; (2) charismatic leadership; (3) style of leadership; (4) dynamics of diplomacy, creativity, and communication; and (5) leader behavior. Participants also provided their views on the internal dynamics of organizational change and its relationship to leadership. Overall, many of the participants felt that African-American student leaders face a peculiar challenge due in some measure to the underrepresentation of their group. Based on interview comments, the following hypothesis emerged: students with leadership experience before coming to college are more likely to become leaders in college when they perceive that there is a vacuum or lack of leadership in an organization where they happen to be. (Contains 41 references.) (GLR)

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A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT LEADERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

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A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study pertaining to the perspectives of African-American student leaders on the question of leadership effectiveness. The subject investigated in the study was leadership effectiveness as perceived and defined by African-American student leaders within the context of their student organizations at the University of New Mexico (UNM). Six African-American student leaders (three males and three females) participated in the study. The method used in the study was in-depth interviewing. The participants included African-American students serving in any capacity as student leaders in their organizations irrespective of rank in the hierarchy of the organization.

The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The transcribed documents were then used in the analysis. The purpose of the study was to capture themes from the voices of student leaders on the question of leadership effectiveness. The study was not geared toward the evaluation of leadership capabilities and qualities of students. The terminal objective of the study was the creation of at least one hypothesis based on a theory of leadership grounded in the data.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research project was to conduct a study pertaining to the perspectives of African-American student leaders on leadership effectiveness at the University of New Mexico. The goal of the study was to capture the voices of African-American students in order to identify themes and categories that may shed light on their specific views regarding certain aspects of leadership.[1]

Statement of the Problem

The concepts of leadership and leadership effectiveness have been widely studied in education as well as in other disciplines in the social sciences such as political science and sociology, to name only a few. However, the vast volume of data pertaining to leadership (or what makes leadership effective) has not produced a universal definition of leadership (Morris, 1985; Immegart, 1988; Spikes, 1979). On the contrary, numerous studies on leadership have contributed to a confusion regarding the concept by providing hundreds of conflicting and contradictory descriptions of leadership (Morris, 1985; Immegart, 1988; Stogdill, 1974).

Review of the Literature

In his survey of theory and research on education, Stogdill (1974: 7-16) identified and classified more than 70 definitions of leadership. The following excerpts from research studies provide succinct illustrations of various

definitions and descriptions of leadership. In Hersey and Blanchard (1977), leadership is conceptualized as a process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation. In this regard Fiedler (1971) emphasizes the situational nature of leadership indicating that, in order to be effective, leaders need to employ a variety of leadership styles depending on the prevailing dynamics in a particular situation. Halpin (1959, 1966) defines the leader as the "outstanding member of the class." To be effective, this "outstanding member of the class" must strive to contribute to both task achievement and group maintenance (Halpin, 1966: 81).

Furthermore, Sergiovanni (1977) suggests that leadership "involves introducing something new or helping to improve present conditions" (p. 40). Lipham (1964) defines leadership as "the initiation of a new structure or procedure for accomplishing an organization's goals and objectives" (p. 22). Researchers such as Fiedler (1967) and Hemphill (1958) define leadership in terms of the attainment of group goals, the fulfillment of designated responsibilities, and the process of problem solving. To Burns (1978), a leader should "induce new, more activist tendencies in their followers; arouse in them hopes, aspirations, and expectations" (p. 46) Cunningham (1976) defines leadership as "a curious blending of leading and following, provoking and calming, disturbing and stabilizing . . . generating new strength and capability

along the way" (p. 324). It was in this context that Spikes (1977) suggested that "there appears to be no universally accepted definition of this concept [of leadership] which has stood the test of time and inquiry" (p. 8).

Immegart (1988) suggests that part of the problem with research on leadership has to do with the assumptions of researchers and the utilization of idiosyncratic methodologies, highly controlled and contrived questionnaires, and instruments. One of the assumptions among researchers is the notion that leadership is a phenomenon associated with the so-called "great men" who possess "traits" and "characteristics" of the leader (Morris, 1985).

Historically, researchers have spent more time describing the traits and characteristics leaders are supposed to possess. In the process, researchers have neglected to study what leaders actually do over time and in various situations. This problem has been exacerbated by the lack of interest in the utilization of the naturalistic inquiry methods which have the potential for generating relevant hypotheses on leadership, the development of grounded theory, and the unraveling of what leaders actually do as they carry out their responsibilities as leaders (Immegart, 1988; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As I will indicate below, many of these aspects of leadership raised in this literature were discussed by African-American student leaders in this study.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for the development of this qualitative study was based on my philosophical assumptions and outlook. I propose that although the question of leadership has been studied widely in the social sciences as mentioned above, such studies on leadership have concentrated on the investigation of leadership regarding administrators and political figures in organizations.

In my view, researchers have neglected to study the issue of leadership among college and high school students, particularly when the purpose is to generate hypotheses and develop leadership theory. One of the problems in this field of research is the unfortunate proposition that student leaders are not "actual" leaders but rather serve as convenient samples for researchers who are keen on finding participants who are ready to provide data (Immegart, 1988: 271). The thesis or proposition guiding this study is based on the argument that student leaders are real leaders who deserve to be studied as other leaders in the society at large. This study seeks to debunk the notion that student leaders are individuals who serve as convenient groups that readily provide information on leadership to researchers.

Many of the studies on student leaders in high school and post-secondary institutions tend to utilize quantitative rather than qualitative research methodologies (Budig, 1979; Christiano et al, 1982; Fiedler, 1974; Schuh and Laverty, 1983).[2] Therefore, I designed this study while operating

from the assumption that it is a step in the right direction to capitalize on the current paradigm shift in the social sciences in favor of qualitative research methods and study aspects of leadership among student leaders in post-secondary institutions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In light of the problems raised above, this study investigated the following questions regarding the issue of leadership effectiveness as perceived by African-American student leaders:

1. How do African-American student leaders define leadership and leadership effectiveness?
2. How do African-American student leaders develop the skills they consider relevant to the development of effective leadership qualities and practices in their organizations?
3. What are the goals that African-American student leaders seek to accomplish in their leadership positions?
4. What is the role of mentors in the process of leadership development among African-American student leaders at this university?
5. What are the common challenges that African-American student leaders encounter as they carry out leadership responsibilities in their organizations, and how do they tackle those challenges?
6. What are the specific challenges African-American student leaders encounter in their leadership positions depending on their gender?[3]

Research Focus and Selection of Participants

This study was restricted to a sample of students at this university, namely African-American student leaders. The decision to select this sample was influenced by factors such as the need to reduce the amount of data,[4] and the need to

focus on one group instead of studying the entire population of student leaders at the university. Most importantly, I think that this group has not been studied at UNM. This does not mean that the study of student leaders from other ethnic groups is less important. The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 27. This is not surprising in that research studies indicate that college student leaders tend to be younger than the age of the average college student (Stogdill, 1948: 40). The students were not randomly selected but were chosen on the basis of a theoretical sampling (Johnson, 1990: 23).

Methodology

The research method the study utilized was in-depth interviewing (Gordon 1969; Sherman and Webb, 1988; Spradley, 1979; Dobbert, 1982; Goetz and LeCompte, 1984; Patton, 1990). Six African-American student leaders (three males and three females) were interviewed. The participants consisted of those African-Americans serving in any capacity as student leaders in their organizations irrespective of rank in the hierarchy of the organization.

Non-scheduled standardized and non-standardized (open-ended) modes of interviewing were utilized during an interview encounter with each participant. Non-scheduled standardized interviewing entails the administration of the same questions and probes to all participants which may change according to the reactions of each participant. The non-standardized interviewing technique is merely an

interview guide in which general questions for specific information are posed to the participants informally in whatever order or context they happen to arise (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984: 119).

The two methods of in-depth interviewing were used in each interview session in order to avoid a pattern of controlled and contrived interaction with the informants. The predetermined questions were administered during the first part of the interview session in order assure that the participants were given a chance to respond to similar issues and leadership scenarios. However, the non-scheduled interview approach was utilized during the second half of the interview session with each participant. This approach allowed the interviews to take on their own course depending on what a particular participant wished to discuss. The non-scheduled approach was used from start to finish with two participants with whom I was able to establish significant rapport. It was easier to develop rapport with these two participants because of having worked with them before in one of the university departments. The issue of the time element in establishing rapport with participants has been documented in numerous studies (Goward, 1984; Spradley, 1979; Warren, 1988; Punch, 1987).

The interview sessions lasted for an average of 70 minutes per participant. The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The transcriptions produced a total of 102 double-spaced pages. It should be noted that on average

the transcriptions from the interviews with male participants were longer than those for female participants. This difference in length of the transcripts for males and females has to do with the fact that, given the short period in which I conducted this qualitative study, it was easier for me as a male researcher to develop rapport with male rather than female participants (Warren, 1988; Goward, 1984). This was the case even though the females initially were more enthusiastic than males about participating in the study. The transcription of the interviews lasted for a total of 34.2 hours, an average of 5.7 hours per transcription. The transcribed documents were then used in the analysis. The participants were not paid for their participation in the study due to the fact that I did not obtain any research funds to conduct the study.[5]

Triangulation

The methods of triangulation were not used to a significant degree in this study. Part of the problem with triangulation in this study had to do with the fact that student leaders did not provide documents when they were asked to do so. I suspected that they did not want to reveal sensitive information about their organizations. I also felt that student organizations are less bureaucratic and they pay little attention to the keeping of documents on file other than those they think are necessary for the survival of their organizations within the context of the university

bureaucracy. The only method of triangulation I used was to attend the activities organized by the student organizations. I used this approach in order to verify that the student leaders were running their organizations according to the ways they articulated to me during interviews. This turned out to be a very useful method of verification.

Entry into the Field

Entry into the field was initiated with the help of the Dean of Students Office, the Department of African-American Studies, and the Campus Guide to Student Organizations (CGSO). The CGSO is a university publication which lists the names of student organizations and student leaders. The names of 14 African-American leaders were obtained from the CGSO. I forwarded formal letters to the students whom I identified as African-American student leaders.[6]

The formal letter explained the goals, aims, and the objectives of the study to the potential participants and asked if they could be participants in the study. Some of the participants were asked to make suggestions about other African-American student leaders who could serve as participants in the study. As it turned out, this became the most effective way to find participants for the study because it would have been difficult to find participants (whom I don't know) without assistance. A total of 14 African-American students were contacted. Of the 14 students who were contacted, only six were willing to participate in the

study. Eight students were unwilling to participate in the study.[7] All the students who participated in the study indicated that they were leaders before coming to UNM (in elementary and secondary school and community groups).

Collection of Data

The first task in the process of analysis was the scanning and coding of the data through a systematic content analysis. The tape recordings and the data from field notes were narrowed in order to identify pertinent patterns, categories and themes that emerged from the voices of the participants. Typologies were created to facilitate the identification of the themes and categories. The categories and themes were in turn used to generate constructs in order to arrive at the construction of hypotheses and grounded theory on leadership (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Themes Emerging from the Data

The themes that emerged from the data fall into two broad categories, namely: the nature of leadership and the factors prompting students to become leaders. Under the category of the nature of leadership; the themes can be summarized as follows: 1) goals of leadership; 2) style of leadership; 3) leader behavior; 4) qualities of leadership; and 5) leadership and the role of change. Under the category encompassing the factors prompting students to become leaders, numerous themes emerged which include, but are not

limited to, the following: 1) lack of leadership; 2) minority underrepresentation; and 3) minority status and recruitment.

In order to place the discussion of the above-mentioned categories and themes in a qualitative framework, the analysis must be grounded in the emic perspectives of the participants. However, it should be pointed out that the analysis will not deal with all the themes in detail, but rather will discuss a few of them that can provide a general idea about the perspectives of student leaders regarding the issue of leadership and leadership effectiveness at UNM.[8]

Nature of Leadership and Leadership Effectiveness

The question about leadership and leadership effectiveness was posed to all the participants in the study. That is, each participant was asked to provide his/her definition or description of leadership and what makes leadership effective within the context of his/her organization. The responses were varied and unique. For the most part, students provided their definitions of leadership or what makes leadership effective in terms of 1) goals of leadership; 2) charismatic leadership; 3) style of leadership; 4) dynamics of diplomacy, creativity, and communication; and 5) leader behavior. The following excerpts from the interview transcripts will demonstrate the perspectives of the students.

Goals of Leadership

Michael Kwame[9] had this to say about the definition of leadership effectiveness in the context of organizational goals:

> To answer your question of effective leadership, you have to be the one willing to do everything. You may not have to do everything, but you better be willing to do anything - I would say from secretarial, to financial, to running memos. You have to do anything. When you look at your rewards or your goals, you have to be able to set them yourself. What I mean by that is that what do you consider to be successful? Minority groups need to define what they will call successful (p. 5).

Petterson responded to the same question by noting that "to be a leader there are a lot of certain qualities you have to have, and one of them is being open-minded, being able to work with people side by side, not wanting to go in and dictate what goes on in an organization" (p. 1). She also discussed leadership effectiveness in terms of what a leader does in an organization on a day to day basis. For example, Petterson suggested that effective leadership is accomplished by a leader who is willing to carry out all the mundane tasks in order to reach the goals of the organization. According to Petterson, "a lot of the initial paper work and stuff like that has to do with leadership, having . . . someone stand for the entire group and speak for the point of view of all the students as opposed to just personal experience" (p. 1).

Petterson explained that an effective leader is "able to serve . . . members, not thinking of [his/her] own welfare but the welfare of everyone in the organization. A good

leader helps keep the organization together." She emphasized the fact that there is an ever present need for a leader to carry out the above-mentioned tasks, and, therefore, an organization always needs to have a leader to function effectively or "things won't get done" (p. 1).

Other participants, Albert Duma and Phil Musa, corroborated Petterson's remarks on leadership effectiveness in the context of accomplishing the objectives and goals of an organization. In his response to the question on how he tries to provide effective leadership in his organization, Musa responded by pointing out that "I try to make sure that we are making some gains in getting some Black folks into the law school. And this is probably our primary objective" (p. 1). When queried further on what he does specifically to promote leadership effectiveness, Musa had this to say: "Specifically what I do is to try to guide the members in making sure that they are fulfilling the objectives of the Black Law Students Association" (p. 2).

Duma suggested that in order to promote effective leadership in an organization, "you have got to know the people. You have got to know who you are trying to represent. You have got to know how the people feel" (p. 2). Once a leader knows the desires and needs of those in the group they are representing, "the next step is to figure out what is the common problem or the common goals," said Duma (p. 2).

According to Duma, the effective leader in an organization is the one who organizes around an issue, provides practical solutions when there are problems to be solved, and articulates the collective voice of the group rather than voicing his/her individual opinions. Duma pointed out that "if you look at our community here in Albuquerque, the people who are sought out as [leaders] are those that talk loud. They make a lot of noise. They can't take it any more. They can stand forward." To Duma, "those are not the people who make a difference. The people who make the difference are lawyers who the loud people call when something goes wrong. And the lawyers say 'this is what you should do.' Those are the leaders, I think" (p. 7).

Charismatic Leadership

Kwame described leadership effectiveness in terms of charismatic leadership qualities. I asked Kwame to explain why he preferred to describe leadership effectiveness in terms of charismatic leadership and why he was attracted to charismatic leadership. Kwame noted that "personally I don't think that I am a good leader yet. I would like to be more charismatic" (p. 6). Kwame pointed out that to him the cultivation of charismatic leadership qualities allows a leader to develop a depth of knowledge, an unusual ability to listen to people, and a sense of compassion for followers. As Kwame put it: "effective leadership has to do with

charisma in your voice and compassion with your followers. I think charisma also has listening involved in it" (p. 6).

Don Arnold, Kwame's friend who entered the room as I was interviewing Kwame, interjected by making the point that Kwame was already a student leader with a charismatic appeal. Arnold indicated that as far as charisma is concerned, "a lot of people feel like it is the ability to speak. Hitler couldn't speak a damn, but he was an extremely charismatic individual." According to Arnold, "charisma has a lot to do with presence. It is the way you carry yourself, the way you present yourself to people" (p. 11). Arnold concluded his remarks by emphasizing that the cultivation of charismatic leadership qualities comes with time.

Style of Leadership

The students' interviews provided a number of perspectives on the theme of leadership style. For example, their responses dealt with issues such as diplomacy, participatory decision-making, professionalism, and creativity. With regard to his style of leadership Musa said that "I am pretty laid back. I think it is pretty informal - the leadership style. Informal but getting the job done, I think." Musa provided the following example: "Let's say if the secretary wants to do something, [he/she] can do it. I would have a final say, I guess. But we also vote on it. It is a democratic organization. And I try to allow for a lot of input" (p. 3).

Another example of a participatory decision-making style of leadership was provided by Stacey Petterson. She said that "I think that I am really open-minded, but I also have a lot of ideas I want to implement." Petterson elaborated on her style of leadership which emphasizes the sharing of decision-making with members of her organization. In this regard, she pointed out that "I don't force anything that I want to do upon anybody. I offer it to them, and if they want to run with it, then, of course, I work with them on that" (p. 2). In Petterson's view, the key to the utilization of participatory decision-making is in having a leader who is task oriented. Petterson noted that she is "task oriented." According to her, "you can be laid back and still have a functioning organization. And I also try not to put too many tasks on one person" (p. 4).

Dynamics of Diplomacy, Creativity, and Communication

The dynamics of diplomacy, creativity, and communication in regard to leadership effectiveness were articulated by Ellen Johnson, Margaret Carlson and Duma. Johnson prefers a leadership style that emphasizes a diplomatic approach to leadership. She pointed out that "if you approach any situation diplomatically you should be able to get some positive results" (p. 2). Carlson commented that she prefers a leadership style that releases energies of creativity among members of an organization. In speaking of her organization,

Carlson said that "I think that I am creative. I brought creativity to the organization and a sense of communication" (p. 3).

One of Carlson's caveats about leadership style is that a leader must cultivate a sense of dependability and reliability. She said that "I am always there whenever I say I am gonna be somewhere. I am always there. I don't back out" (p. 3). Duma said that his style of leadership emphasizes communication and could be described as informal. He noted that "my approach is more informal, but I would like to see it become more professional, where you deal at the professional level" (p. 2).

Leader Behavior

Petterson commented on the expectations of followers upon the behavior of leaders. She explained that to be a leader, your behavior must be consistent and honorable. To this effect Petterson said that "being a leader, people often forget that you have to present yourself in a consistent way. To be a leader, you have to act like a leader . . . on a day to day basis." Petterson stressed the point that it is important for a leader to cultivate a consistent character toward everyone at all times. In this regard, she said that "I am consistent in my behavior as opposed to saying one thing, and then . . . doing something else at another time" (p. 5). According to Petterson, when you are a leader, "your peers look up to you which makes you . . . work harder to be

better everyday." Petterson concluded her comments regarding the theme of leader behavior by suggesting that "a leader has to be a good person . . . you check yourself on a day to day basis, so that you are producing for the African-American people as a whole" (p. 6).

Dynamics of Leadership and Organizational Change

The participants commented on aspects of internal dynamics of organizational change and its relationship to leadership. These aspects of organizational change can be summarized as follows: 1) significance of change and its relationship to leadership; 2) lack of crisis and leadership; and 3) support for leaders during times of crises.

Significance of Change and Its Relationship to Leadership

Duma commented on the relationship between effective leadership and the need for constant change in an organization. Duma felt strongly that it is impossible to bring about effective leadership if there is little or no change taking place in an organization over time. In this regard, Duma made the following observation: "What I am saying is that you always need change for something to get better. The longer it stays the same, the worse it can be in any situation." Duma said that many organizations he has joined at UNM suffer from a lack of change over time as they function like "old regimes" headed by leaders who are opposed

to change (p. 8). To illustrate his point, Duma provided examples explaining that "if you have a white racist [in an organization] who says nonsense for 15 years, that is bad. Likewise, if you have a militant [Black] person who speaks for the organization for 10 years, that is bad because you start to stop listening to him. That is because he is the organization." The solution to these problems, according to Duma, is to "say that there needs to be all new leaders. Not me, not someone else, but someone who can introduce new ideas" (p. 3).

Lack of Crisis and Leadership

One of the internal problems of organizations, according to Kwame and Arnold, is a lack of crisis. Kwame suggested that people often remain apathetic and are generally not ready to follow any leader in the absence of a crisis. This is the reason Kwame insisted that African-American students have a lot of problems where they cannot unify around an issue in the absence of a crisis. Kwame noted that "a lot of the problems we have is because we can't unify. We are not ready to unify" (p. 1). This is the reason Kwame thinks that "Black people are not ready to follow a Black leader. People do not want to follow your leadership. That is the main thing" (p. 5).

Support for Leaders During Crises

Arnold provided a piece of advice by saying that leaders should be aware that "there are a lot of people who don't want to be led necessarily as long as things remain calm." Such people, according to Arnold, often want to be leaders themselves as long as things remain calm in an organization. Arnold explained that these "people criticize a lot and have a lot to say" in the absence of a crisis. But during the times when there are crises in organizations, the very people who have been critical and never wanted to be led will turn to the leadership of those like Kwame who seem to have the leadership capabilities to carry an organization out of crises "when there are real battles to be fought" (p. 10).

Factors Prompting Students
to Become Leaders

Themes under the category of factors prompting students to become leaders were elicited by the following questions: 1) what inspired you to become a student leader? and 2) what is special about being an African-American student leader at UNM as opposed to other groups of students? In the sections that follow, I will discuss the perspectives of the students regarding the themes which emerged in response to those questions. The themes include the following: 1) lack of leadership; 2) minority status and leadership; 3) minority status and racism; and 4) African-American underrepresentation and recruitment.

Lack of Leadership

Three of the participants felt that what prompted them to become leaders was the lack of leadership among African-American students at UNM. The other three participants felt that what prompted them to become leaders were role models such as their parents and other family members.

With regard to becoming a leader, Kwame said that "I think that I was never inspired to become a leader. I was pushed into it. When I came here I was not the leader. I was the assistant person." When queried further on how he was pushed into being a leader, Kwame responded by saying that "there were a lot of incidents that took place." According to Kwame, "the incidents were so outrageous that we began to say what the problem was. Initially people were saying 'how can it be like this.'" When I asked him to identify the "outrageous incidents," Kwame referred to a number of African-American athletes who were having problems with the UNM police during the year he arrived at UNM.

The crucial factor prompting Kwame to become a leader was that all the other members in his organization felt that they had a lot to lose, and Kwame was the person who had less to lose by speaking out. As Kwame put it: "I think that I was the person who had less to lose if there was something to come down." He pointed out that "because of my fearlessness to some of the structural dominance, I was pushed in the forefront" (p. 3).

The remarks of Duma on why he became a student leader supported the comments of Kwame. Duma responded by saying, "I think it was lack of leadership. That is, I felt, well man, somebody is not doing it right. And somebody is always telling me, 'if you can do it better, then do it.' So, lack of leadership. And then of course great leaders such as Martin Luther King and Mandela" (p. 3). Johnson also supported this view by pointing out that factors influencing her to become a leader were "events more than individuals." According to Johnson, "when I came to this campus, seeing how things were run maybe, I became concerned" (p. 2).

Minority Status and Leadership

The question that asked students to explain what is special about being African-American student leaders at UNM as opposed to student leaders from other ethnic groups elicited responses that were drastically different. For example, two respondents argued that the experiences of students at UNM are more or less the same regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. Four of the six respondents said that the experiences of African-American students are drastically different and specifically contrast with the experiences of Anglo students as well as students from other ethnic groups represented at UNM.

Johnson and Carlson were the two respondents who thought that the experiences of students at UNM were similar regardless of their ethnic background. For example, Johnson

said that "I don't see anything special about being a leader on this campus - being African-American. Johnson gave an example where she explained that "you might become more noticed in a crowd of a majority white students, and it is called recognition. I don't see anything special about it." Johnson went on to make this observation:

> I think they [Black and Anglo students] encounter similar experiences. I have served on a lot of committees where I have been the only Black student, and the white students become just as frustrated in dealing with [UNM] bureaucracy. I don't think that it has so much to do with race as we face the same challenges. It becomes all of a strife to be us against them (p. 3).

Carlson supported Johnson's observation about the common experiences that Anglo and Black women encounter at UNM. She provided an example by saying that, in general, society does not expect Anglo and Black women to do well in engineering. According to Carlson, "in a way the [Anglo and Black] students are facing the same thing. It is just hard for women all around to be in engineering" (p. 3).

Those students who disagree with the overall analyses of Carlson and Johnson provided observations that are drastically different. For instance, Petterson commented that the experiences of Anglo and Black students at UNM are basically different. According to Petterson, the experiences of these two groups are different because

> "a lot of times, just in general, their voices [voices of Anglo students] are going to be heard. When we speak out, it is always . . . people take it as negative. It is always negative, and it will always be against somebody. It is always gonna

> be a claim of racism as opposed to human rights. Therefore, people are always gonna look at you, and if you have something to say, they automatically think that [you] must be coming to speak about something negative (p. 5).

Furthermore, Musa suggested that the experiences for which African-American student leaders must provide leadership among themselves are different from those of Anglo students. Musa said that "I will have to say positively yes. They are different. I don't think that they [Anglo students] have to deal with outside factors as African-Americans, minorities, or women. I think that the Anglo system is not adapted to values or systems different from the Anglo-American [value system]" (p. 5).

Kwame provided several examples to show how the experiences of African-American students differ from those of Hispanic students. One of the examples Kwame provided was that of higher representation of Hispanic students, Hispanic administrators and staff at UNM in comparison to African-Americans. He indicated that "the specific thing is that Hispanic students can go over to the registrar [when they] have a problem. It may call for a little above and beyond the call of duty kind of thing." According Kwame's analysis, the Hispanic students, in contrast to their African-American counterparts, do get special treatment from Hispanic administrators and staff people. Kwame said that

> The Hispanic student can go and get that extra service, the information, that a Black student will not and cannot get. He [the Black student] has to go through the entire process of red tape. He

> has to run around for everything. There are no short cuts for him. It is a matter of who you know. This is how this world is. We don't know anyone in the power structure (p. 2).

Vignette

With regard to Duma's comments on the comparison of experiences of Anglo and African-American students, it is useful to provide a vignette in order capture his pertinent responses about this theme. Below FK stands for Freddy Kustaa and AD stands for Albert Duma.

FK. Do you think that your counter-parts in the Anglo student body encounter different or similar challenges as student leaders at this university?

AD. Different, different because they are not dealing with the unifying of people like we are. We are dealing with unifying us together.

FK. What would you attribute that development to, the fact that the Anglo students don't have to deal with the question of unity?

AD. Yes, because what I am trying to say is like . . . if I am an Anglo, and I want to be a leader, I have 26,000 people or 25,000 people on this campus that I won't offend, really. Or we could say if I am Anglo, then maybe there are at least 15,000 people I wouldn't offend by virtue of being Black. So, now if I am Black, I have got to watch what I say, and, at the same time, say what I have got to say to my people. So, you see what I mean?

FK. Yes.

AD. So, you have got all those different dichotomies of the whole situation, or it might be more. If I am white, they may be more accepting or receptive to hear what I have to say. But if I am Black and say something that sounds like a legacy of disbelief, something they have not heard before, then I am radical. I am radical, militant, crazy . . . they cannot deal with it.

FK. Are you suggesting that even though Anglos are students like the others, their voices are more legitimated by the university system?

AD. Yes, most definitely that, you know. You look at the regents and the president and you bring it down, you know. Our whole society is . . . white is beautiful. White is right. And you are already starting with a set back. Therefore, you could prove one or two things. You could prove that I can be white too, you know. So, don't worry I am not a threat to you. Hey, I am not a threat to you, but I am not gonna compromise who I am, and what we stand for (p. 6).

Minority Status and Racism

The theme of racism was explicitly addressed by Kwame. In reference to the struggle against Jim Crow laws and racism in this country, Kwame began his comments with a cautionary note saying that "we as a country have made numerous strides. It cannot be said that we haven't." However, Kwame pointed out that since the struggles of the 1960s, Black people in proportion to other people have lost. Kwame said that a lot of people often say that Black people can now go to desegregated bathrooms and there are no Jim Crow laws anymore. He insisted that those were not the kinds of problems that kept Black people down. According to Kwame, "what kept Black people down are the barriers that still keep Black people down." He identified these barriers as "corporational racism," "political racism," "social racism," "economic racism," and "educational racism." Kwame concluded by saying that "believe it or not, this is how it is" (p. 9).

With regard to New Mexico, Kwame was more specific, and made this comment: "In this state we get racism directly

from the white people, and we get it directly from the Hispanic and Chicano people. No questions asked." Kwame reassured me that he was not against people of any color. For example, he stressed the point that "I think that I understand the difference between a Chicano person and a Hispanic person. I personally relate to both." However, Kwame said that people should realize that the reality in which he provides leadership is one where racism has divided minorities in certain ways thereby creating "enormous tensions" among them (p. 9).

African-American Underrepresentation and Recruitment

The problem of African-American underrepresentation at UNM was addressed by all the participants. In particular, all the participants commented on the impact that underrepresentation has on the leadership of African-American students and their organizations. All the participants pointed to the fact that African-American representation at UNM is less than two percent of the total student enrollment. For instance, Petterson referred to the problem African-American student leaders encounter as they try to establish and maintain very small organizations. Petterson suggested that such a task is a major challenge because the establishment of a Black organization is "something that some people think would never happen" (p. 6).

In reference to his organization, Kwame commented that "ours is so small. The slightest attitude over the slightest

confrontation between individuals in the organization can cause it to collapse. We have to be careful" (p. 3). To Musa, for example, the issue of African-American underrepresentation at UNM is a critical one for his organization. Musa said that his organization has been engaged in discussions with administrators at the law school about the need to increase the enrollment of African-American students in the law school. To illustrate the seriousness of the problem, Musa explained that at the law school this year, his organization consists of only seven members and "there is only one African-American student graduating out of a class of 110 law graduates" (p. 1).

Overall, many of the participants felt that African-American student leaders face a peculiar challenge in trying to establish and maintain small organizations drawing their members from such an underrepresented group. This presents the need for constant attempts to recruit African-American students in order to increase their enrollment at UNM. According to Petterson, recruitment of African-American students is a major problem because student organizations "do not have a lot to offer" in terms of economic resources to accomplish this important goal (p. 6).

Many of the perspectives of African-American student leaders discussed above are related to Morris' (1985) description of what effective leaders do and the qualities they develop. Morris suggests that effective leaders of present day organizations and those required for the twenty-

first century are associated with the following: 1) active participation; 2) creating a facilitating climate; 3) providing inspiration, justice, and fairness; 4) resisting unnecessary demands; 5) recognizing talent; 6) practicing ethical integrity; 7) promoting creativity; 8) awareness of organizational structure; 9) utilizing teamsmanship; 10) cultivating an inner calmness in the midst of stress; and 11) developing positive relations with others (p. 9).

The characteristics of effective leadership the student leaders referred to are summarized succinctly by Berg (1977) in the following statement:

> Effective educational leaders have a clear understanding of their functions; a desire for and a knowledge of group dynamics; be academically and professionally honest; have a desire to cut red tape; be understanding, patient, imaginative; . . . must exhibit the virtues of honesty, integrity, cooperation, and concern for others; . . . and must be adaptable (p. 212).

Conclusion and Summary

In this study I attempted to demonstrate that student leaders such as the African-Americans investigated here are real leaders who do not simply serve as convenient groups ready to provide data on leadership. As is the case with any group, many African-American student leaders were not readily available to provide data on leadership. The majority of the student leaders who were contacted did not want to participate in the study. Nevertheless, the study was

successful in capturing the perspectives of students that provided pertinent insights on the question of leadership.

As I pointed out in the review of literature section, most of the issues raised by African-American student leaders are corroborated by a number of social scientists and researchers. These issues, for example, include: a) the role of leadership in task and goal accomplishment (Brandt, 1992; Halpin, 1959; Roberts, 1986; Hersey and Blanchard, 1977); b) the dynamics of participatory decision-making (Blake and Mouton, 1964; Conway, 1984; Woods, 1989; House and Dessler, 1974); c) leader effectiveness (Immegart, 1988; Burns, 1978; Fiedler, 1967, 1971a, 1971b); d) personal qualities of a leader (Spikes, 1978; Stogdill, 1948; Immegart, 1988); e) leadership and the role of change (Morris, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1977; Brown, 1967); and f) style of leadership (Christiano and Robinson, 1982; Sergiovanni, Metzcus, and Burden, 1969).

In particular, the perspectives of African-American student leaders made a unique contribution to the understanding of the use of participatory decision-making in organizations. Musa and Petterson, for example, referred to the need to utilize participatory decision-making if the purpose is to promote democratic practices in an organization. However, they stressed the point that participatory decision-making can only be effective if the leader of the group is constantly guiding the members toward the accomplishment of the tasks and objectives of the group.

Woods (1989) points out the problems encountered when using participatory decision-making in an organization and having members "become more committed to the group as a group than to the group as a committee with a task" (p. 444).

The diverse responses of the student leaders to the questions about leadership can be analyzed in the context of Fiedler's (1971a, 1971b) contingency theory of leadership. According to Fiedler, there is no single effective style of leadership because the dynamics that call for effective leadership responses are conditioned by the situational factors that a particular leader finds in his/her organization at a specific point in time. Students bring specific experiences not only to UNM, but to their leadership roles in organizations. Therefore, student leaders cannot be expected to always provide identical responses to the questions regarding leadership and leadership effectiveness; style of leadership; personal qualities of a leader; leadership and the role of change; and the factors prompting them to become leaders.

All in all, based on the fact that all participants were leaders before coming to UNM (in elementary and high school and community groups), the analysis of the data leads me to the development of a grounded theory which posits the following hypothesis: students with leadership experience before coming to college are more likely to become leaders in college when they perceive that there is a vacuum or lack of leadership in an organization where they happen to be. In

order to firmly ground this theory, similar studies need to be conducted on the perspectives of student leaders from other ethnic groups at UNM. Inductive reasoning suggests that "the whole is greater and other than the sum of its parts."[10] Therefore, all student leaders at UNM should be studied before the above-mentioned thesis can be applied to the other groups.

To conclude, it is important to discuss briefly the relationship between the dynamics of change and leadership as articulated by Duma: "You always need change for something to get better" (p. 8). This is an important theme in a paper written in a course on organizational change. Duma's discussion of the need for change in organizations is indeed a timely subject which has received increasing attention of researchers in recent years (Morris, 1985; Shane, 1976).

Morris (1985) reminds us that the issue of change in organizations is of utmost concern to social scientists and futurists as the twentieth century draws to a close. The arrival of the twenty-first century goes hand in hand with the transformation of the world from an industrial to a post-industrial information society, a transformation which is characterized by rapid and permanent change. This transformation is inducing what Morris calls "the lack of permanency among social structures and individuals." Morris explains that these developments "have resulted in the prevailing sense of instability in organizations" (p. 15). According to Morris, effective leadership in organizations

should hold on to the idea that rapid socio-politico economic change will continue and that stability in society and organizations will be attained in change itself (p. 14). This is to say that the stability in society and organizations of the past is no longer attainable. As Morris points out, the new reality is that

> living in a world of change is the only possibility available to individuals, and a new sense of stability must be established within this milieu. In this manner, the concept of stability is equated with the permanency of change (p. 15).

Morris' conceptualization of the dynamics of change has several implications for leaders in organizations. This means that the effective leader has to introduce to other members the concept of permanent change in organizations and the need to see stability in the "permanency of change." Furthermore, Morris suggests that the effective leader of today must assist members of his/her organization in developing constructive and responsible attitudes towards change. Both Morris and Duma raise an important issue which needs to be studied seriously by students of organizational change and leadership. To this end, I think that the study I conducted on African-American student leaders at UNM was a worthwhile endeavor which provided me an opportunity to learn from the leadership experiences of students at this university.

Notes

1. The goal of this study was to find out how African-American student leaders perceive and define leadership effectiveness; that is, what is the criteria that African-American student leaders use to define and describe the type of leadership qualities and practices that allow them to effectively accomplish their roles and goals as leaders?

2. Here, for example, I am referring to some major works on leadership that include the following: Fiedler and Chemers, 1974; Dill, 1984; Fiedler 1967; Greenfield, 1968; Halpin, 1966, 1958, 1956; Stogdill, 1974, 1963, 1957, 1948; and Willower, 1979. This is only a partial list of the works that pay little attention to the study of leadership as it pertains to student leaders.

3. At the end of the paper (Appendix A), I have attached a list of additional possible questions that guided the interviews. The questions are not listed in order of importance.

4. For a discussion on the problem of data reduction in qualitative research, see Goetz and LeCompte (1981).

5. Ethnographers and anthropologists have raised the issue of compensation for the time participants spend on the provision of information to researchers. In other words, the participation of informants in studies without compensation can no longer be taken for granted. However, this is not a problem which can be resolved easily because the compensation of informants can and does affect the relationship between the informants and the researcher in negative ways. This is particularly the case in regions of the world where there could be a large income gap between the researcher and the informants. For detailed discussions about this issue, see appropriate sections in Ellen, 1984; Dobbert, 1982; Spradley, 1979; and Goward, 1984.

6. See a sample of the formal letter that was forwarded to the participants at the end of the paper in Appendix B.

7. Ellen (1984: 117) refers to many anthropologists who have made remarks about potential participants who have been particularly uncooperative. He refers to an anthropologist who notes that one informant in Kenya required 15 visits to his homestead and three encounters outside before he would give an interview. Another informant gave information only when "held captive" on a 30 mile journey in a researcher's car. During the

course of the semester I felt discouraged by the participants who were reluctant to participate in the study. According to Akeroyd (1984), researchers should recognize the rights of citizens to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, and not to be studied (p. 138). Also, see Wax (1971) for the treatment of some problems that researchers encounter with participants in field research.

8. The responses below were provided by the participants based on my strategy to elicit responses while taking on a non-judgemental posture to what the students were saying. The reporting of the students' perspectives on these issues does not mean that I agreed with everything they said. For the most part, the perspectives of the students are presented here in the argot of the students with little editing. I also wish to indicate that some of the participants were quoted more than others because they tended to provide more detailed answers to the questions. Since I provided a discussion on the literature pertaining to leadership before and after this section, this part of the paper will emphasize the emic perspectives of the students. At one point I felt that some participants had the tendency to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear (Ellen, 1984). In particular, the literature will be incorporated in the last section of the paper dealing with what I consider to be the most important themes that emerged from the data bearing on organizational change, namely: participatory decision-making and the dynamics of change and leadership.

9. All the names of the students are coded. These are not the real names of the students.

10. This is a quote from the class handouts of Professor Carolyn Wood in a course on Organizational Change; Department of Educational Administration, The University of New Mexico.

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